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CONTACT: Fran Viereck
Program Manager, Workforce Training Grant Program
Montana Department of Commerce
406-841-2736

Marissa Kozel
Montana Department of Commerce
406-841-2772

Workforce Training Grant Funds Available from Commerce

(HELENA) – Montana businesses will have a new opportunity to obtain financial support for employee training starting July 1, 2007. Approximately \$4 million in Workforce Training Grant (WTG) program funds will become available July 1, from the Montana Department of Commerce.

The state-funded WTG program is also known as the primary sector training grant program and the new worker training grant program. It was designed to assist new and expanding businesses in new worker training for industry specific skills.

“Every day we’re working to create more good jobs for Montanans,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “This program works hand in hand with our economic development efforts, by providing an opportunity for newly hired employees to obtain the necessary training and skills they need for higher paying new jobs.”

At Governor Schweitzer’s request, the 60th Montana Legislature increased funding for WTG from \$1.4 million annually, to nearly \$4 million annually. Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite says the confidence the Legislature showed in the program is proof that it works.

“Our Workforce Training Program is a highly effective tool for businesses and the state economy,” said Anthony Preite, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. “It is a flagship economic development program, it is a moneymaker for the state budget and helps fund many other state programs.”

The state funded program is targeted toward businesses creating at least one, net, new job that pays at least the current average county wage or the current average state wage, whichever is lower. That wage can include fringe benefits. New employees must work at least thirty-five hours per week year round. Program applicants must demonstrate that at least fifty percent of their sales originate outside of Montana. The maximum funding available to train a single employee is \$5,000.

Since 2004, twelve WTG awards have been made and award funding has ranged from \$75,000 to \$1,955,000. Those awards have been leveraged with more than \$73 million in business investments. More than 1,500, good paying, new jobs have been created for Montana workers. Past WTG grantees include medical treatment facilities, aeronautics-related businesses, cable/satellite television providers, a mine, a medical transcription business, a tribal computer-related enterprise and an Internet printing business.

Contact Fran Viereck, Job Training Grant Program Manager, Business Resources Division, Department of Commerce, at 406-841-2736 or fviereck@mt.gov for program specific questions.

Interested applicants can find guidelines and current state and country average wage rates on the web at: <http://www.mtfinanceonline.com/WorkForceGrnts.asp>

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